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THE GULL



GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER VOL. 89 NO. 2 FEBRUARY 2004

FOUNDED 1917

Activists at Work from Alameda to Mountains of Mexico

Following is the second installment of our two-part series on Golden Gate Audubon Conservation Committees. It's not too late to start your New Year right by joining one of our busy, active, fun Conservation Committees.

Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge

For the past nine years, a group of dedicated conservation activists has been working tirelessly to have 565 acres of the closed Alameda Naval Air Station transferred to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and designated as a permanent national wildlife refuge. This valuable site hosts one of the world's most important (and few remaining) nesting colonies of the endangered California Least Tern, as well as important roosting areas for Brown Pelicans, Western Gulls, Peregrine Falcons, and thousands of other resident birds. The greatest stumbling block to transfer of the site and creation of the wildlife refuge is the question of who will take responsibility for cleaning up contaminants on the land. Members of the Friends of Alameda Wildlife Refuge (FAWR) have taken their cause to the halls of Washington, D.C. and urged federal officials to act on transfer of the land. Although the FAWR committee has made significant progress, the process is frustratingly slow.

In the meantime, FAWR committee members are far from idle. Volunteers lead monthly work parties to keep Least Tern habitat suitable for nesting and clean up debris washed ashore in storms and high tides. FAWR members work with biologists to monitor wildlife populations at the refuge, sponsor Least Tern research projects, and build community awareness about the refuge campaign. Committee members have raised funds for large signs to warn boaters to keep appropriate distance to avoid disturbing birds and seals using the breakwater, as well as funds to support Golden Gate Audubon's advocacy, restoration and education efforts in Alameda.



The Snowy Egret is one of many birds that exists both in Mexico's Sierra Gorda and in the San Francisco Bay Area.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Wetlands' Reprieve from Political Act

A very rare piece of good news for the environment was released from Washington, D.C. last month, giving a reprieve to threatened wetlands—and providing a sharp contrast to the continual barrage of anti environmental, pro-industry actions perpetrated by the Bush Administration over the past three years. The good news occurred with the help of Golden Gate Audubon's "Armchair Activists," whose letters, along with thousands of others, helped to convince the Bush Administration to retract a decision that could have devastated the nation's remaining wetlands.

Wetlands play a critical role in the environment, as they purify water, help control flooding and provide habitat for myriad local and migratory species. Over 55 percent of all bird species and 75 percent of all fish species depend upon wetlands at some time in their life cycles, as do over 50 percent of all endangered species. Because wetlands form in low-lying, flat areas near large bodies of water—often adjacent to where humans like to build houses or raise crops—many wetlands have been destroyed. The continental U.S. has already lost over 50 percent of its historic wetlands and California has lost over 91 percent.

The passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972 helped reverse the trend of huge wetland losses, but since most wetlands are found on privately owned land, their preservation is difficult, and wetlands regulations are frequently opposed.

In recent years, new attacks have been launched

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society membership is \$20 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. Monthly meeting: second Friday in the West Bay; third Thursday in the East Bay, 7:00 p.m.

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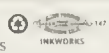
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WETLANDS, continued from page 1

against "isolated wetlands," which are smaller areas found some distance from large bodies of water. The prairie potholes of the Dakotas and Minnesota (the breeding ground of essentially all Central Flyway waterfowl), the vernal pools of California (habitat for many endangered species), and small intermittent streams are all considered isolated wetlands. Aside from their value for wildlife, recent studies have also shown that these wetlands are vitally important in removing water pollutants.

A recent, controversial U.S. Supreme Court decision removed one of the tools federal regulators used to protect isolated wetlands. The narrow, 5-to-4 decision ruled that the presence of migratory birds, alone, does not give the federal government regulatory authority over these wetlands. There are many other grounds for such federal authority to continue. But the Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency—the federal agencies with regulatory authority over wetlands—issued a "guidance," stating that all isolated wetlands probably need not be regulated and that federal regulators should confer with Washington before making any decisions. This meant as much as 20 percent of U.S. wetlands could be left unprotected.

The Bush administration then proposed to turn the "guidance" (which has no binding

legal effect) into a regulation with the power of law. This would have undermined the nation's entire wetlands regulatory program. People all over the country responded. Over 135,000 letters were received by the Administration, most of them opposing this new rule-making. Golden Gate Audubon Armchair Activists played a critical part.

And they worked! The Bush Administration recently announced that it would not move forward with a rule-making to turn the isolated wetlands guidance into a regulation. It is a victory that Golden Gate Armchair Activists can take pride in helping to win. Unfortunately, the war is not over. The "guidance" is still in place and efforts must continue to convince the administration to retract it also. Stay tuned for further action.

How You Can Help

Join our team of Golden Gate Audubon Armchair Activists. All you do is agree to write at least one letter a month on a conservation issue. We send you either an e-mail or hard copy Action Alert that describes the issue, tells you where to send your letter and provides a sample letter. To become an Armchair Activist, e-mail ggas@goldengateaudubon.org or call 510-843-2222.

By Arthur Feinstein
Conservation/Education Director

Facts Belie Claims of Clean-up Costs

The hackneyed old claim by industry—echoed and relied upon by the Bush administration—that environmental regulations are "too costly" has just taken a big hit. The administration's own Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has released a report that definitively states that the economic benefits to society of environmental regulations far exceed their cost to industry.

Specifically, the report shows that Clean Air Act regulations provide society with economic benefits 5 to 7 times greater than the cost to industry of complying with those regulations. In other words, the economic benefits of having clean air (and the associated environmental and human health benefits) outweigh the cost to industry of preventing harmful discharges into the air. What's true for air is likely true for water as well. The economic benefits of having clean lakes and streams should far outweigh industry's costs of preventing and cleaning up contaminated water discharges.

This report is a big win for environmentalists, as the Administration's environmental policies continually favor industry arguments that environmental regulations are too costly and therefore should be relaxed to relieve their burden on industry. Is it possible the Bush Administration will have to rethink its environmental policies based on factual evidence rather than political polemics?

PROGRAMS

Anne McTavish



You won't want to miss either of the February membership programs. We meet socially at 7 p.m. Programs begin at 7:30 p.m. For more information about upcoming events or detailed directions to either location, please see our web page. You may also check for updates online at www.goldengateaudubon.org/Chapter/programs2003-2004.htm.

Chemical Defense in Birds

San Francisco

February 13

Dr. Jack Dumbacher

With photos and lively tales, ornithologist Jack Dumbacher will survey how birds around the world use chemicals as defense against their natural enemies. Jack has studied toxic birds for over 10 years at the University of Chicago and the Smithsonian, and now continues his work as Department

Chairman and Curator of Birds & Mammals at the California Academy of Sciences. Come learn about chemical-carrying birds—what chemicals they use, which birds use them, and how they may be adaptive to the birds. County Fair building, Strybing Arboretum, Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way
Directions: www.strybing.org/visiting/page2.html

Crossing the Frozen Roof of the World

Berkeley

February 19

Pam Flowers

Geographer Pam Flowers presents a slide show and talks about her 2,500-mile adventure across the North American arctic coast. Pam set out alone and unsponsored with an eight-dog team in an attempt to cross the frozen roof of the world. Her goal was to follow

the route of Knud Rasmussen's portion of the 1923-24 Fifth Thule Expedition. Enduring darkness, isolation, one of the stormiest winters on record, a polar bear attack, and flooded sea ice, she successfully completed the first solo expedition both by a woman and an American across 2,500 miles of Arctic from Barrow, Alaska to Repulse Bay, Canada. In her book, *Alone across the Arctic: One Woman's Epic Journey by Dog Team* (Alaska Northwest Books, October 2001), she recounts her gripping adventure.

In 1996, Pam became the 14th recipient of the "Gold Medal from the Society of Woman Geographers," following in the footsteps of Amelia Earhart, Margaret Mead and Jane Goodall. She has participated in nine Arctic expeditions, seven by dog team, two by snowmachine. Pam has completed the 1,049-mile Iditarod Sled Dog Race, reached the Magnetic North Pole three times, traveled over the frozen Arctic Ocean farther north than any other solo woman and completed the longest solo dog sled journey on record by a woman. Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin)

Directions: www.northbrae.org/directions.html

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education and birding activities!

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Afton E. Crooks, Charlotte Hill (*Quail*), Ann & Mike Richter

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* With Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership

FIELD TRIPS

Susan Groves



Upper San Leandro Reservoir

Moraga


Sunday, February 1

Leader: Bob Lewis

510.845.5001, Rlewis0727@aol.com

Meet at 9 a.m. in the Valle Vista Staging Area for this half-day trip. Grassy hills, pines, oaks and open water provide varied habitats for land birds and waterfowl. Rain cancels. Beginners welcome.

Take Hwy. 24 to Orinda and exit on Moraga Hwy. Continue approximately four miles to Canyon Road. Turn right at the traffic signal and continue 1.2 miles to the Valle Vista Staging Area on the left.

 East Bay Drivers/riders meet at 8:30 at Rockridge BART station.

Hayward Regional Shoreline

Hayward

Sunday, February 1

Leaders: Pamela Llewellyn, 925.413.8329, pllewellyn@kleinfelder.com; Michael Butler, 510.684.3375, mjbkl@earthlink.net

Meet at 8:30 a.m. for a moderate 3-hour walk around Frank's Dump and Mt. Trashmore. Look forward to seeing many species of land, shore and water birds as well as a variety of raptors. Beginners welcome. Please bring binoculars and scope if you have one.

To get there, go south on 880 to Hayward, exit at Winton Ave West, go to the end of Winton and park at Hayward Regional Shoreline parking lot. We will meet in the parking lot at the trailhead.



Strybing Arboretum

San Francisco

Sunday, February 1 and March 7

GGAS co-leaders: Allan Ridley, Rick Ferrick; Strybing Arboretum Docents: Linda Lyons, Helen McKenna. 415.566.3241

Meet at 8 a.m. at the front gate of the Arboretum for this regular first Sunday of the month half-day trip. See *January Gull* for details. Beginners and all others welcome.

Free, Drop-In Birding for Children

Strybing Arboretum, San Francisco

Saturdays, February 7 and March 6

San Francisco Nature Education Leaders:

Nancy DeStefanis, Angie Geiger;

Strybing Arboretum Docent: Darin Dawson

415.387.9160, info@sfnature.org

Note new schedule and new times! Meet at the Main Gate near the Strybing Bookstore at 10 a.m. Bring binoculars (if you have them) and a pencil. This birding tour and nature hike for children tromps through the exciting microhabitats of Strybing Arboretum. Ages 7 and older. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Trip will run until noon.

Co-sponsored by San Francisco Nature Education, Strybing Arboretum Society and Golden Gate Audubon Society.

Las Gallinas Sewer Ponds

Marin


Saturday, February 7

Leader: Hugh Cotter

415.931.7736, htcotter@sbcglobal.net

Meet at 8:30 a.m., rain or shine, at the parking lot for this half-day trip. We'll see a variety of water birds, raptors and more in migration. Beginners welcome.

Take 101 north and exit at Lucas Valley Drive. Go east on Smith Ranch Rd. to the end. Take a sharp left to the sewage treatment ponds, just before the county park. Drive past the headquarters to the parking lot on the left.

 East Bay Drivers/riders meet at 8 a.m. at North Berkeley BART.

Coyote Hills Regional Park


Fremont

Sunday, February 8

Leader: Anne Hoff

510.845.5908, Anne2210B@cs.com

Meet at 9 a.m. at the Visitor Center parking lot. Coyote Hills is a unique park with fresh water marsh and salt pond habitat. We should see ducks, shorebirds, wintering songbirds, raptors. Bring lunch and liquids. Beginners welcome. Heavy rain cancels.

From the East Bay take I-880 south to Rt. 84/Dumbarton Bridge exit. Turn right and continue west. Exit on Paseo Padre Pkwy. Turn right and continue north one mile, left on Patterson Ranch Rd. to Coyote Hills. [S] 

Berkeley Aquatic Park and Albany Crescent

Berkeley

Saturday, February 14

Leader: Rusty Scalf

510.666.9936, rscalf@jps.net

Meet at 9 a.m. We hope to see diving ducks, grebes, etc. at Aquatic Park and shorebirds at Albany Crescent. We'll also walk the landfill area at Albany Crescent and look for terrestrial birds like Meadowlarks. The little beach and broken down pier might yield Turnstones. There are two ponds on the south end of Aquatic Park. The southmost is next to a large radio antennae. The next one is next to what used to be a bird rescue center. We will meet in the small parking lot next to that structure. If driving east on Ashby Ave (from the freeway) you pass underneath a bridge which is Bay St (and your destination). To get to Bay St, turn right (south) on 7th. You will quickly be forced into a right then a left turn and will find yourself on Hollis St. From Hollis turn right on 67th, cross the railroad track, then right on Bay. You will drive over that bridge you saw and into Aquatic Park. Parking lot is on the right side shortly after you enter. If coming west on Ashby, turn left onto 7th St.



Contact Susan Groves, Field Trips Committee Chair, at 510.654.5954 or susangroves@att.net:

- if you can share a ride or if you need a ride,
- if you have difficulty reaching a leader and need information,
- if you have suggestions for trips, or
- if you are interested in leading a trip.

key



Carpool

[S]

Entrance fee required



Biking trip

Our second stop will be the Emerville Crescent next to Golden Gate Fields race track. Easiest way from Aquatic Park is to get on the freeway north bound (the onramp is right there between the two southern ponds) and proceed to the Albany Exit. Then head west toward the race track parking area.

Panoche Valley

San Benito County

Sunday, February 15

Leader: Chris Carpenter,
510.639.1262 (day), 510.547.2201 (eve),
cgbirds@comcast.net

Meet at 8 a.m. at the intersection of Hwy. 25 and J-1 in Paicines, 12.5 mi. south of Hollister. From there we will drive east to I-5 south of Los Banos. This trip traverses raptor habitat which usually produces Golden Eagle, Merlin plus Mountain Bluebirds, Phainopeplas and Vesper Sparrows. Considering the distance involved in this trip, be sure to fill your gas tank before leaving Hollister, and carpool from the Bay Area if possible. Bring lunch and warm clothes. Trip will end about 3 p.m. Rain cancels.



Aquatic Park

San Francisco

Sunday, February 15

Leader: SF Maritime National Historical
Park Ranger Carol Kiser
415.561.7100 or 561.7104

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the foot of the Hyde Street Pier (Hyde & Jefferson) for this beginners bird walk. Approximately 2-hour walk. Discover birds next door to the urban environment. Dress in layers. Trip is wheelchair accessible.

Wednesday at Arrowhead Marsh

Alameda County

Wednesday, February 18

Leader: Courtenay Peddle, 510.532.8911
(no calls after 9 pm), capeddle@there.net

Meet at the Arrowhead Marsh parking lot at 9:30 a.m. to study and enjoy the wintering birds. Up to 14 species of ducks, and always the possibility of seeing Clapper rails. Heavy rain cancels. Bring scope if you have one. All

levels of birders welcome.

Take I-880 south to Hegenberger and then west on Hegenberger to Doolittle Drive. Right on Doolittle, right onto Swan Way. Left into MLK park. Drive to end for Arrowhead Marsh parking lot.

Bike and Bird in Foster City and Redwood Shores

San Mateo County

Sunday, February 22

Leader: Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233
(no calls after 9 pm), kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the parking lot of Mariner's Point Golf Course in Foster City. The trip is a flat 20-mile loop on the Bay Trail and other bike paths, mostly paved, some on bike lanes on city streets. This circuit of Foster City and Redwood Shores should find winter visitors and other shore and water birds on the bay, on lagoons, lakes, and sewer ponds. Trip continues to mid or late afternoon. Bicycling helmet required. Dress in layers, and bring lunch and liquids. Rain cancels.

From Hwy. 92 in Foster City, take Mariner's Island Blvd. Exit (between Hwy. 101 and the San Mateo bridge) and go north until road ends at a light at 3rd Ave.; continue across the street into the parking lot. Note: the Millbrae BART station is about 6 mi. north along the Bay Trail, Bayshore Hwy. and Millbrae Blvd.



Lake Chabot Park

Alameda County

Saturday, February 28

Leader: Emily Serkin, 510.293.9360,
eserkin@girlsinc-alameda.org

Meet at 9 a.m. This half-day trip will focus on improving everyday birding skills by paying attention to details of visual and behavioral field marks. A good assortment of our common birds should be present and courting behavior of Great Blue Herons and Red-shouldered Hawks is possible. Trip ends at noon. Heavy rain cancels. Beginners are welcome. Take 580 east to San Leandro. Take the Dutton/Estudillo Ave. exit. Turn left at the second light, which is Estudillo. Shortly, the road, which becomes Lake Chabot Rd., curves to the right; take a left turn at this point to stay on Estudillo. Drive straight into the park. We'll meet at the first parking area. Restrooms are found further into the park if you keep going straight.



Grizzly Island and Beyond

Solano County

Sunday, February 29

Leader: Robin Leong, 707.643.1287,
robin_leong@netzero.com

We will meet at 8:30 a.m. Our plans are to bird Hill Slough, Rush Ranch, Grizzly Island and the Hwy. 113 corridor. Since there are muddy roads, your leader cannot promise exactly where we will bird. If we are lucky, we will see most of the marsh birds, waterfowl and raptors. There may be a chance to see Tule Elk, River Otters, hear Black Rails, see Suisun Song Sparrow, Rough-Legged Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk and 3 species of owls. Please bring binoculars, scopes, layered clothing, a lunch and sweets to share (if you want to see some interesting views of wild life in the afternoon). Trip will end by mid-afternoon. Heavy rain cancels.

Meet in the parking lot near the McDonald's Restaurant at Sunset and Hwy. 12, North of the turnoff to Grizzly Island Road. There we will consolidate cars.



Alameda Creek/Coyote Hills/Quarry Lakes Bicycle Trip

Alameda County

Sunday, February 29

Leader: Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233
(no calls after 9 pm), kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at 9:15 at the Isherwood Staging Area in Fremont. Approximately 20 miles total, all on bike trail, very little uphill. We will start by bicycling a short distance to Quarry Lakes Regional Park then bike along the Alameda Creek Regional Trail to Coyote Hills Regional Park, returning to Isherwood mid to late afternoon. Dress for cool, windy weather. Bicycle helmet required. Bring lunch and liquids. Rain cancels.

By car, take I-880 to Fremont and take the Alvarado Blvd/Fremont Blvd exit; go east on Fremont Blvd. In about 0.5 mi, turn left onto Paseo Padre Parkway, which then crosses Decoto Rd in about 1 mi. and shortly thereafter parallels Alameda Creek; 0.8 mi after Decoto Rd, turn left onto Isherwood Dr, cross the bridge, and then immediately right into the Isherwood Staging Area. If coming from the peninsula via the Dumbarton Bridge, continue east on Hwy 84, which becomes Decoto Rd. after crossing I-880, and 1 mile past I-880, turn right onto Paseo Padre Parkway and

FIELD TRIPS, continued on page 7

OBSERVATIONS

December 1–31, 2003
Bruce Mast



Along with rain storms and holidays, December brought us CBCs. Hotline reports were enriched by rare sightings from 14 different count circles. Pt Reyes Peninsula tallied the most species (181), followed by Crystal Springs (177) and Western SON (173). Oakland generated the highest participation, with 146 birders and 18 feeder watchers.

Loons to Ducks

Bodega Bay, SON, continued to be a reliable spot for Red-necked Grebes (AW; LH, JM, RF). A single bird was found on Dec 13th in the waters off of Crissy Field, SF (SA). On the 20th, 3 more were seen across from Campbell Cove, SON (DiA). The Oakland CBC documented 2 White-faced Ibis at the Oakland Airport, ALA on Dec 14th, a first for the count (BU, GA, JaC; EIS, EC). The count also discovered a Brant at Bay Farm Island, ALA (RSc, oob). December produced two tantalizing Eider reports. The first, on the 8th, was a possible **Steller's Eider** (*Polysticta stelleri*) at PRNS, MRN, seen only in flight (RS). The second, a **King Eider** (*Somateria spectabilis*), a possible first-winter female, was seen on the water off Lincoln Park, SF, on Dec 13th (HC; ME, ASH).

The Coyote Pt, SM, Harlequin Duck continued to dazzle observers in Dec. (RST). Another Harlequin was a first-ever Oakland CBC sighting (PW; GP, LG, BG). The same day (Dec. 14th), the Pt Reyes CBC found a Harlequin at the lower end Drake's Estero, PRNS, MRN (oob). Long-tailed Ducks were also reported from both the Oakland (PW; GP, LG, BG) and Pt Reyes CBCs (oob). Elsewhere, Long-tailed Ducks were sighted at Tomales Bay, MRN, on the 8th (RS); Coyote Pt, SM, on the 19th (RST); Cliffhouse, SF, on the 21st (HC); and at Pescadero Marsh, SM on the 28th and 30th (RST; GH).

Raptors to Alcids

A number of observers were treated to Merlins and Peregrine Falcons this month, but

the most noteworthy falcon was a juvenile Northern Goshawk at Bodega Bay, SON, which the Western SON CBC tallied on Dec 28th (DSH). The high tides of Dec. 22-24 were eagerly anticipated by all species of rail hunters (including humans), and they did not disappoint. Heavy rains and high winds added to the flood levels, which flushed out a **Yellow Rail** (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) at Waldo's Dike, Inverness, MRN, on Dec 23rd (RS). At the same location, as many as 10 Black Rails sought refuge on the dike (DB, PB, WL, RS). Many observers caught brief glimpses and fantastic looks at Black Rails fleeing for high ground at Palo Alto Baylands, SCL (mob). Perhaps the most surprising report was from the Hayward-Fremont CBC on Dec 21st, which documented a Black Rail along the old ALA Cr channel, ALA (PG).

Mountain Plover tallies along Robinson Rd, SOL, surpassed 200 on the 2nd (RM). Rock Sandpipers turned up on Dec 20th near the Ocean Colony Half Moon Bay Golf Course, SM (GD), and at Bodega Bay, SON (DiA). The Ruff at New Chicago Marsh in Alviso (SCL) lingered through the month (MRo, MM, RR, FV). In SON, single Red Phalaropes were reported from Bodega Harbor the 6th through the 15th (AW; JeH, JoH) and in Bridgehaven on the 10th (LH). The Oakland CBC tallied a Phalarope sp. off the Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary in ALA. If determined to be a Red, it would be just the 4th Oakland CBC record (LN; IS, JLV, AB).

A 3rd-winter **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (*Larus fuscus*) joined the gull flocks at Rodeo Lagoon, MRN, on Dec 29th (SS). In a reprise of last year's Glaucous Gull debates in SF, a possible second-year Glaucous (or hybrid) spent 11 days at Stow L, starting on Dec. 10th (SB; mob). On the 26th, an immature

Glaucous Gull was reported at Cypress Lawn Cemetery in Colma, SM (PM). On Dec 11th, 14 Black Skimmers were found roosting at Charleston Slough, SM (GB).

Doves to Thrashers

On Dec. 1st, a Long-eared Owl was discovered at Cypress Grove Preserve in Marshall, MRN (KB), perhaps the same bird tallied on the Pt Reyes CBC. Palo Alto and Oakland CBCs also found Long-eared Owls. On Dec. 28th, Long-eared Owl was calling along the Tennessee Valley Trail, in the MRN Headlands (KB). Both the Pt Reyes and Hayward-Fremont CBCs documented Short-eared Owls (KB, oob). A Short-eared Owls were also observed hunting in Half Moon Bay, SM, on the 2nd and 20th (AJ, GD).



Steller's Eider

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

A male Costa's Hummingbird visited a Berkeley (ALA) feeder on Dec. 7th and 8th (ReF). Two Lewis's Woodpeckers, remnants of the Sept.-Oct. irruption, lingered through the month at Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve, SCL (AE, JMy, BJ, GB). A juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker continued throughout the month in Tilden RP, CC (SHi; mob). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker made the highlight reel from the Crystal Springs CBC. Other Yellow-bellied sightings this month included a young, male at Pt Reyes Station, MRN, on Dec. 1-8 (RS); a Livermore, ALA, bird on Dec 8th and 21st (GBi); and a Belmont, SM, juvenile on the 13th (RST). Finally, the Pt Reyes CBC highlights featured a Red-naped Sapsucker (oob).

MRN birders found 3 Hammond's Flycatchers last month: at the Chicken Ranch Beach on Tomales Bay on Dec 8-16 (RS); at

Latin America Committee

Golden Gate Audubon's Latin America Committee (LAC) sponsors conservation and educational programs in Latin America to benefit birds and their habitats. Committee members are actively involved in education and ecotourism to help promote environmental protection and cultural exchanges between the U.S., particularly the Bay Area, and Latin American countries.

The LAC works closely with Golden Gate Audubon's Education Program in Oakland elementary schools. Committee members joined with the Grupo Ecologico Sierra Gorda in Mexico to develop a pen-pal letter-writing program between East Oakland fourth- and fifth-graders and students in the Sierra Gorda. The students write to each other to share experiences of nature in their local communities, as well as information about their own daily lives and families. The East Oakland students who participate in the letter exchange are bilingual, and all of the letters are written in Spanish to help improve their Spanish writing skills.

Currently, the Latin America Committee is working on a prototype educational package about the Sierra Gorda, which will include materials about migrating birds common to California and South and Central America and will be used in bilingual programs in Oakland elementary schools, as well as schools in the Sierra Gorda.

LAC member Dana Gardner will contribute paintings of common local birds in the Sierra Gorda, and other aspects of natural history, local geography and history will be included. The LAC plans to develop similar programs in the Dominican Republic and Panama.

The Committee is offering a birding trip

to Panama in March, which will generate funds for the Panama Audubon Society and the LAC's work. The LAC is also making a scouting trip in February to the Sierra Gorda Biological Reserve in Queretaro, Mexico, where it is working with the Grupo Ecologico Sierra Gorda to develop ecotourism.

How to Get Involved

Friends of Alameda Wildlife Refuge Committee

Meetings Every third Monday, 7 pm

Location Alameda Point, Building 1, Room 140

Contact Leora Feeney, 510.522.8525; www.fawr.org

Latin America Committee

Meetings Monthly

Location Members' homes

Contact Chair Bob Risebrough, pelacanus@igc.org or Secretary Audre Newman, audre@artfuleducation.com

Quail Habitat Day At Harding Park

Following our successful Quail Restore-A-Thon last November, Golden Gate Audubon volunteers will plant hundreds more quail-sustaining plants at the Harding Park Golf Course on Saturday, Feb. 7th. Join us from 9 a.m. to noon for a few hours of fun, healthy and environmentally helpful outdoor activity. Snacks and beverages will be provided. For directions, call our office at 510.843.2222 or e-mail ggas@goldengateaudubon.org.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The GULL is the official newsletter of Golden Gate Audubon Society. As a supporting member of Golden Gate Audubon, you receive a subscription to *The GULL*, a 10 percent discount on all items purchased at our nature store, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Local members of the National Audubon Society automatically receive *The GULL*. Not a member yet? Contact our office at 510.843.2222 for details.

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